

# STATE

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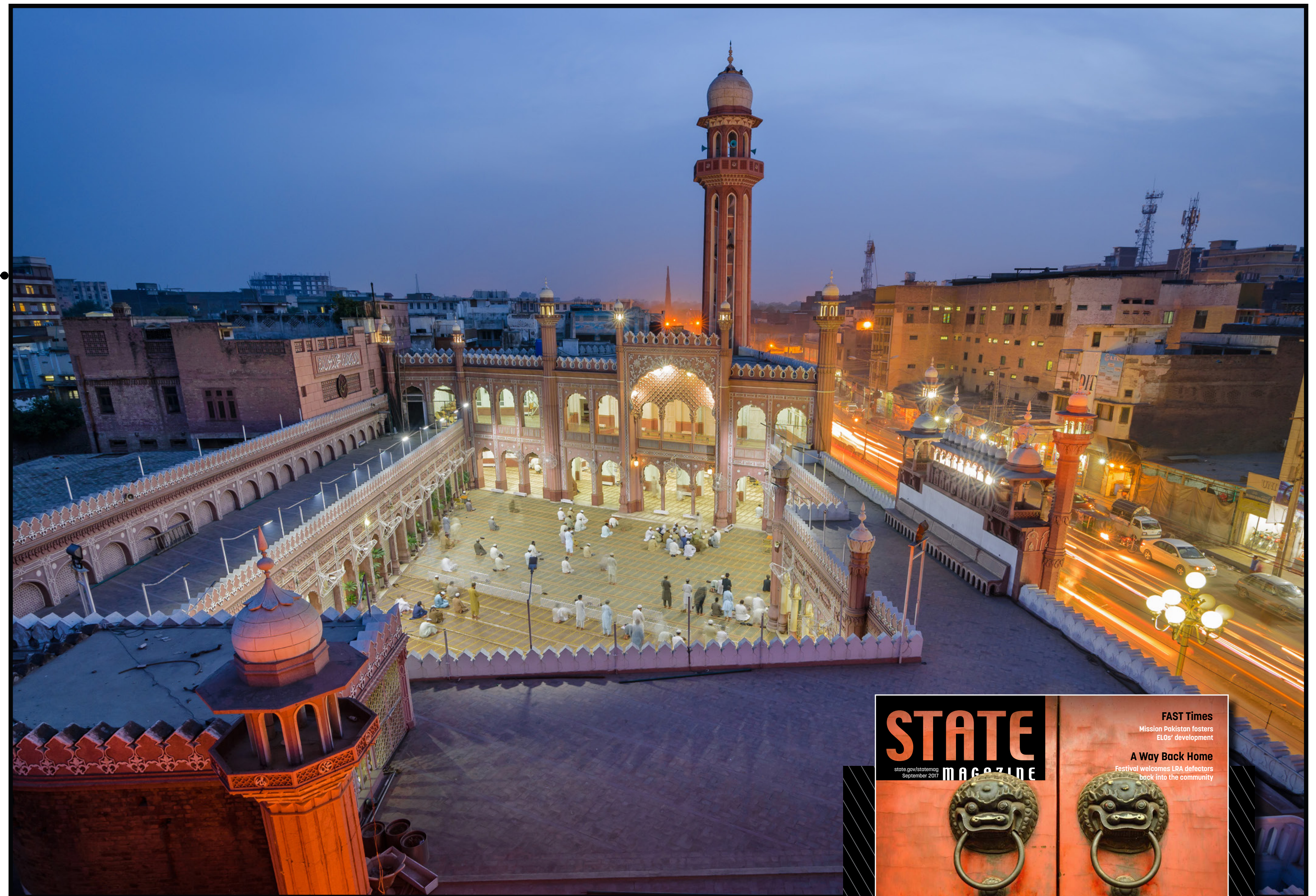
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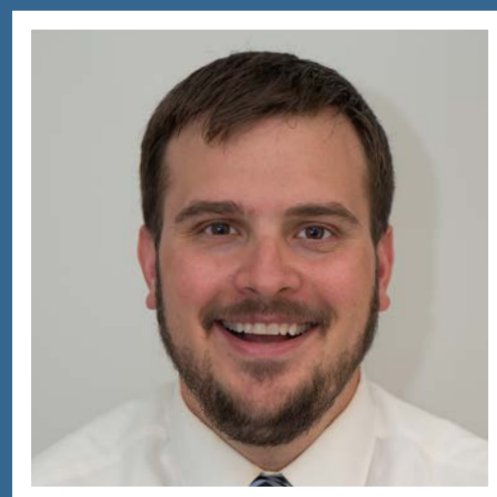


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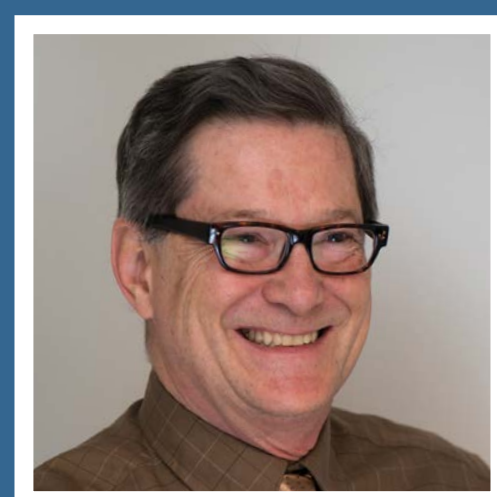
Brass dragon door knockers adorn a home in Shenyang.

*Photo by Canduela*





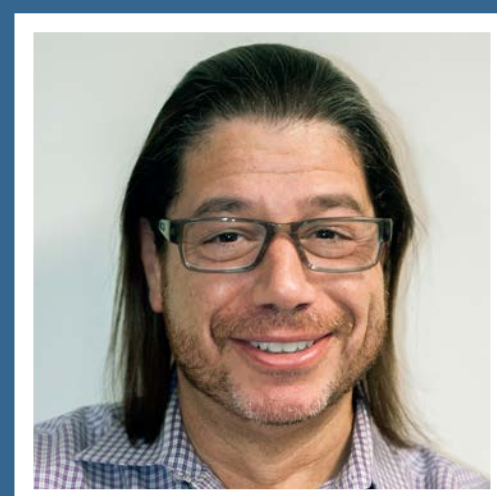
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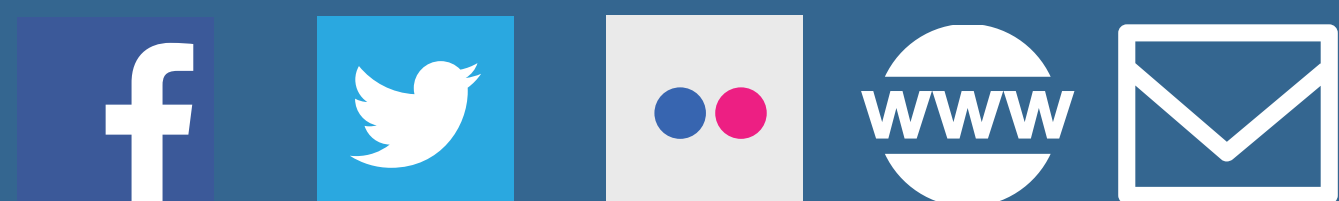
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# STATE

## MAGAZINE





Meeting at the American Center in Moscow in July 2016 are, from left, two visitors to a Russian-American youth conference and an alumni participant of the FLEX program, in which the Russian government no longer allows its citizens to participate.

*Photo courtesy of the American Center in Moscow*

## Moscow American Center Rebounds with Growth

In 2013, the Russian government began closing American Centers, culminating in the 2015 closing of the center in the city's Library of Foreign Literature. But, in less than three weeks, the U.S. Embassy found replacement space in a building on its compound, and Center Director Kore Gleason and three staff members created a meeting space for the related activities. The embassy recruited Russian exchange program alumni as volunteer program leaders, consular waiting rooms were used for larger nighttime events, and the post's security team worked out procedures to let Russian visitors enter the compound.

Since it opened in October 2015, the new center has hosted more than 1,300 events and more than 29,000 visitors—a 70 percent increase in turnout and a two-fold increase in the number of events, compared with the previous time frame. Russian student volunteers lead clubs, such as the biweekly “TED Ed” club that fosters English public speaking skills, and a business club that models U.S. business practices around corporate social responsibility. Experts across many disciplines use the center to network and share ideas.

The center now holds dozens of skill-building and career-enhancing workshops weekly, from a debate club to programming lessons and 3-D modeling seminars. Each week, 500–600 Russians attend educational events that expand their perspectives on the United States through direct

contact with Americans and learning about American values. “At a time when Americans and Russians are inundated by negative stereotypes of one another, visitors crave a genuine connection where we are talking and listening to each other,” Gleason observed.

The center plans to soon relocate to a temporary location, due to a long-scheduled embassy construction project, moving into the area vacated by the consular section on a busy Moscow thoroughfare.

Even with the most recent developments in the political relationship between the United States and Russia (new sanctions, a reduction in U.S. Embassy staffing), spaces like the American Center continue to grow people-to-people ties, which highlight shared values, areas of cooperation, and most importantly, hope for a closer relationship in the future. ■





Children and staff pose in the newly-renovated daycare facility at the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon.  
*Photo by Jorge Arcanjo*

## Embassy Day Care Center Celebrates 20th Anniversary

On Sept. 1, the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon will celebrate the 20th anniversary of its day care center. Inaugurated by then first lady Hillary Clinton, the center promotes a family-friendly workplace. Managed by a parent advisory board by the embassy's American Employee Association and housed within the chancery building, the center, named "Pipocas," serves American and local employees.

Throughout the years, more than 300 children have used the day care center, one of only five at U.S. diplomatic posts worldwide.

Having an on-site day care promotes workplace productivity and is time-and cost-efficient for the parents, who can re-enter the workplace in a less stressful manner. Lisbon's center has been a significant source of positive morale and an example of actions the U.S. government can undertake to become more competitive with the private sector, sending a positive message to the Portuguese about the importance the U.S. Embassy places on its community's needs and the value of supporting working parents. The post's family-friendly environment benefits children, parents, the embassy community and the Department's image in Portugal. ■





Workers build the vehicle maintenance garage as part of Phase Two of construction at the FASTC. The garage will have 14 service bays that can hold vehicles from sedans to fully armored SUVs.

*Photo by Angela French*

## Training Center on Target for 2019 Completion

The Department of State's new Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) is on schedule for completion in mid-2019. The facility, located in Blackstone, Va., consolidates hard skills training currently provided at 11 disparate sites. All U.S. government employees working abroad under chief of mission authority will receive foreign affairs counterthreat training at the center.

“FASTC is the culmination of years of effort by many different offices in Diplomatic Security, as well as the Department writ large,” said Robert Weitzel, director of the Diplomatic Security Office of Training and Performance Standards. “It’s an asset that will ensure that DSS can accomplish its mission well into the future.”

Hard skills training includes firearms familiarization, defensive driving, surveillance detection, emergency medical care and recognizing improvised explosives devices.

FASTC will allow instructors to carry out multiple training exercises simultaneously. The 1,400-acre campus includes three high-speed driving tracks, off-road and unpaved tracks, explosives ranges, tactical structures that simulate situations where there’s a risk of serious injury or death, and two “smokehouses” for training personnel to survive when fire is used as a weapon. The facility will also have a location to conduct land navigation training and capstone exercises, and a mock embassy compound that replicates embassy structures.

FASTC’s location will give its staff opportunities to collaborate with key partners in the special operations community and the mid-Atlantic region’s law enforcement officers. A video on the DS website shows FASTC’s progress. ■





At the Electronic Recruitment Application summit in June, participants gather with staff of the Office of Overseas Employment.  
*Photo by Lea Coley*

## Office Holds Worldwide LE Staff Summit

The Bureau of Human Resources' Office of Overseas Employment (OE) held its first LE Staff Summit June 12–16. The event focused on recruitment of LE staff and eligible family members overseas. Participants included LE staff members who work as human resources professionals at the 10 posts worldwide currently pilot-testing the Electronic Recruitment Application (ERA). Those posts are in Vienna, Budapest, Rome, Kuwait, Ashgabat, Tokyo, Abidjan, Windhoek, Dakar and Bogota.

ERA will shift recruitment from being mostly paper-based to an electronic system. Currently, posts receive more than 1 million paper applications annually, each of which must be processed manually. The new system, however, will create efficiencies, standardization and have better metrics and monitoring. It will also emphasize the recruitment discussion occurring between the human resources specialist and supervisor prior to the recruitment and continuation of that discussion once the employee is hired.

Summit participants represented each of the Department's geographic bureaus and offered feedback on overseas recruitment and ERA. They were also given their first introduction to ERA with hands-on training, creating vacancy announcements and user accounts, sorted and shortlisted applicants, and correspondence. They also reviewed questions to be added to ERA's job-specific question library and brainstormed on ERA-deployment strategies.

At the summit, OE discussed other initiatives it is involved in, including the Eight Qualities of Overseas Employees effort and the creation of a recruitment process map. With summit participants' input, these documents will become the hallmark for future recruitment strategies overseas. The documents are on the OE intranet website. ■





Family Liaison Office Director Susan Frost, center, poses with Lydia Bitner, left, who won third place in the FSYP Art Contest's 5-8-year-old category, and Sophia Bitner, first-place winner in that contest's middle school category at the 2017 Youth Awards Ceremony.

*Photo by Daniel Schwartz*

## Foreign Service Youth Honored at Annual Ceremony

In July, the Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF) hosted the annual Foreign Service Youth Awards Ceremony, where FSOs' children were recognized for their art, essay writing, video production, community service and scholarly achievements. Also presented were the Foreign Service Youth Advocacy Award, honoring an adult who has demonstrated long-term commitment to Foreign Service youth; the scholarships of the Associates of American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW); and the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) Merit awards.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Human Resources Connie Dierman praised winners for using their international experiences to become more resourceful and resilient adults.

This year's FSYF Art Contest theme was "There is More to Me than What You See." Winners in each of three age categories received cash prizes. In the essay contest, applicants wrote of what they learned from the Foreign Service life experience that was outside of their comfort zones. Six winners, three in each age category, received cash prizes.

In the KidVid Contest, sponsored by FSYF and FSI's Overseas Briefing Center, students ages 10-18 produced DVDs about life, from their perspectives at overseas posts. Winners received cash prizes, and their videos became part of the center's collection. FSYF also asked D.C.-area youths to make videos depicting their local lives, and two young videographers received a cash award in this category.

To honor Foreign Service youth who demonstrate outstanding community volunteerism, the FSYF gave two winners prize money. The group also awarded three high school students with Academic Merit Awards. More information about the FSYF, AAFSW and AFSA awards programs is on the organizations' websites. ■





Engaged in a panel discussion on Open Skies are, from left, former Deputy Assistant Secretary John Byerly, Henrik Hololei of the European Commission, then-Deputy Assistant Secretary Thomas Engle, Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus of Aviation Strategy & Concepts and Keith Glatz of Airlines for America. *State Department photo*

## Department Celebrates Open Skies Agreements

On July 10, a Department of State event recognized the 25th anniversary of the U.S. Open Skies civil air transport policy and the 10th anniversary of the U.S.-European Union (EU) Open Skies aviation agreement, one of the most important in civil aviation. The Celebrating Aviation Milestones in 2017 conference brought together officials from the departments of State, Transportation and Commerce, Federal Aviation Administration and EU, plus industry representatives.

The United States has Open Skies agreements with more than 120 partner nations which, according to Steve Martin, vice president of aviation consultancy InterVISTAS, was responsible for a 35 percent decrease in airfares and 75 percent increase in passenger traffic. Another speaker at the event, Filip Cornelis, acting director of Aviation at the European Commission's Directorate for Mobility and Transport, said the U.S.-EU Open Skies agreement brought transatlantic air service to an additional 52 city pairs, reducing fares 27 percent and saving consumers \$49 billion.

Open Skies launched in 1992 with a U.S. air transport agreement with the Netherlands, and led to agreements with other interested countries, increasing affordable, competitive international air travel.

According to then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Transportation Affairs Thomas Engle, "The United States will continue to lead international efforts in pursuing additional agreements and ensuring the enforcement of existing agreements in order to create and maintain an international civil aviation market that benefits passengers, businesses and economic growth in the United States." ■



# Conflict Matters

BY SHIREEN DODSON, DIRECTOR,  
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN



## Am I in Conflict?

Dealing with conflict can be challenging. Some people prefer to ignore a conflict until it becomes unbearable. Some would rather address it as soon as it comes to their attention. Others prefer to avoid it altogether and at all costs. In the Office of the Ombudsman, we know that, for all the existing ways to avoid conflict, we have just as many (if not more) ways to productively manage it. In our past few articles, we've written about some of the various tools and techniques that can be helpful if you find yourself dealing with workplace conflict—aiming to help you develop “conflict competency.”

When you're in conflict, it does not always manifest itself in an overly aggressive way, or what we might usually think of on hearing the word “conflict.” Conflict can simmer at a low level and comes in a variety of types. Consider that time you told your supervisor, “Whatever you want is fine. Just tell me what you want me to do.” In actuality, you weren't fine with it. Did this strike a nerve with you? Did it make you think about your personal values or relationships? Noticing your triggers and knowing what type of conflict you may be facing can go a long way in helping you decide what approach is best or how to productively manage a situation. The first step in resolving conflict might actually be recognizing that you may be facing a conflict! Maybe you didn't share your honest views on a topic or maybe you got upset with someone but didn't let them know why. Most people respond to conflict by seeking to restore harmony, seeking the conflict's logic or seeking a particular outcome. Reflecting on your motivations, as well as those of the other party, can help you decide which approach is best.

Conflicts come in all shapes and sizes. According to Trish Jones, a pioneer in the conflict coaching field, conflict can arise from a threatened identity, a bad feeling or emotion, or a loss of power. To resolve a conflict, a first step, then, is to understand what the conflict is actually about. Having a clear picture of what the issues are reduces the chance of a mismatch between the problem and the solution. When people are in conflict, their emotions are heightened. Most people look for a win, as they feel they have been wronged.

While it is very important to understand the emotions that come with conflict, it is also important to understand the type of conflict. To do this, it can be helpful to identify conflicts by their core elements. Our next three articles for State Magazine will be dedicated to identifying and exploring the characteristics and various types of conflict, and what techniques can be helpful in managing them. In our next article we will discuss relationship conflicts, arguably some of the most challenging and yet also some of the easiest conflicts to understand and help people resolve. After that, we'll discuss structural and data conflicts, the types of conflict that we see quite frequently coming up in the Department. Finally, we will talk about value and interest conflicts, which can sometimes go hand in hand, but can also be very powerful in their own right.

To productively manage conflicts, it can be helpful to ask questions and truly try to understand what all the parties are looking to accomplish. Recognizing you're in a conflict situation, and figuring out what type of conflict it is from the conflict's beginning, can help guide and formulate the right questions to ask. ■



## A Greater Good

Office engages religious leaders on foreign policy

By Rachel Leslie, acting director, Office of Religion and Global Affairs

It may come as a surprise, but combating wildlife trafficking, promoting the integration of resettled refugees and sharing practices to combat drug-resistant diseases are just three recent priorities of the Office of Religion and Global Affairs (RGA). That's because religious communities and dynamics play an important, but often overlooked, role in such matters.

Established in 2013, RGA assesses religious dynamics and engages religious leaders, communities and individuals on a range of foreign policy priorities; supports implementation of the National Strategy on Religious Leader and Faith Community Engagement by advising Department leadership on policy matters related to religion; supports posts and bureaus in assessing and identifying ways to cooperate on shared objectives; and serves as a point of entry for those seeking to engage the Department on matters of religion and global affairs.

Because religious communities can be drivers of change, RGA raises awareness among policymakers on how religious communities can mobilize local and transnational networks; provide on-the-ground expertise, information and assistance; and work with the Department and other multilateral and nongovernmental organizations on shared priorities.

"Increasingly, we see religious communities and actors at the forefront of initiatives such as encouraging sustainable development, promoting good governance, combating trafficking in persons, mitigating against conflict," said Amy Lillis, RGA's former acting special representative, its top



Former Acting Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs Amy Lillis addresses the 69th Annual Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA in Harrisburg, Pa., in July. Photo by Kalim Bhatti

official. "Our foreign policy analysis needs to include an understanding of the role of and potential partnership with religious actors in addressing U.S. foreign policy issues."

In one such initiative, RGA partnered with Mission Nigeria to engage with religious leaders in speaking out and acting against corruption. Following an RGA-facilitated workshop, Muslim and Christian religious leaders established the Religious Leaders Anti-Corruption (RLAC) committee in 2016 to take a leading role in anti-corruption advocacy. The RLAC committee has since adopted a charter and action plan, developed partnerships | Cont. | ▼



with leading anti-corruption voices in civil society, and rolled out tools for their community members.

Religion, like many other forces in society, is fluid and dynamic, and must be accounted for as it is lived. Because religious dynamics are complex, religious practices, beliefs, narratives and identities must be assessed in their local context. Although religious dynamics are relevant to many foreign policy priorities, RGA advocates a right-sized approach to ensure policymakers appreciate the interplay between religion and other societal factors such as politics, economics and culture. To assist Department colleagues in assessing religious dynamics and engaging religious actors, RGA has developed resource materials and provides training in courses at FSI.

RGA also coordinates with the Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF) in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. IRF has a related but distinct mission: It engages governments, religious actors and civil society to promote and protect the right to freedom of religion and belief throughout the world, and produces annual reports on the status of religious freedom in all foreign countries and territories. While IRF works exclusively on freedom of religion, RGA focuses on the role of religious communities and dynamics in a broad range of foreign policy issues and coordinates with the Centers for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in other federal agencies.

Religious dynamics and communities continue to be enormously consequential on the local and global stage, and the Office of Religion and Global Affairs assists the Department in understanding this influence to ensure the most comprehensive foreign policy analysis and leadership possible. ■



Participants gather after a meeting of the Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy, of which the Office and Religion and Global Affairs is a member, in Helsinki in June. The TPRND network brings together officials from foreign ministries in the European and Atlantic regions whose portfolios focus on religion.  
*Photo by Tari Zsolt*



Nazanin Ash, vice president of Public Policy and Advocacy at the International Rescue Committee, addresses the first Religion and Diplomacy conference hosted at the State Department in September 2016.  
*State Department photo*





# SPEARs for Safety

Host-nation teams bolster security overseas

By Angela French, writer, Public Affairs, Bureau of Diplomatic Security

**T**he Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) seeks to provide a safe environment for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. To enhance security, DSS established the Special Program for Embassy Augmentation and Response (SPEAR) in 2014, a valuable asset for regional security officers (RSO) and host nations' security.

The SPEAR program enhances the security of high-threat, high-risk posts by helping a host nation's security elements better respond to emergencies at U.S. diplomatic facilities. SPEAR institutionalizes and refines a country's capability to support U.S. diplomatic security through ongoing training. Its curriculum focuses on the hard and soft skills needed to respond to threats facing Department of State personnel overseas.

"We work with the host nation to handpick members of a country's security or military forces and train them to become a quick reaction force," said Randy Smith, the assistant regional security officer at the U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali. "SPEAR teams respond within minutes and are additional security support for the embassy." | *Cont.* | ▼

A SPEAR team member keeps watch over the U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, in August 2016.

*Department of State photo*





Marine Security Guards assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, train with SPEAR members and embassy bodyguards in 2016. *USMC photo*

The DSS Office of Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) manages the program while RSOs implement it in host nations. ATA/SPEAR Unit Chief Mike Swanberry believes “the security value of a proficient host-nation police force that is dedicated to our diplomatic facilities cannot be overstated. The daily interaction between RSO personnel, the ATA mentors and the SPEAR teams has built trust, confidence and interoperability among all the embassy security elements if a crisis unfolds.”

Sam Aronson, assistant regional security officer at the U.S. Embassy in Niamey, Niger, agrees. “SPEAR is a crucial part of our security apparatus,” he said. “With weekly training at the newly built ATA-funded firearms range and tactical

shoohouse, our SPEAR officers are among the best and brightest Niger has to offer.”

Aronson said his office regularly integrates the SPEAR team into drills, including a recent exercise that practiced recovering the ambassador during a simulated violent protest.

Currently, SPEAR teams support U.S. diplomatic missions in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Iraq, South Sudan, Tunisia, Nigeria and Kenya. ATA offers the SPEAR program based on several factors, such as the host nation’s emergency response capability, its political will to protect U.S. facilities and the threats and vulnerabilities of U.S. interests and facilities in a region. | *Cont.* | ▼





Bamako SPEAR members and a Marine Security Guard assist an embassy volunteer during the yearly capstone exercise in October 2016.

*Department of State photo*

The ATA's Swanberry said that, unlike foreign assistance training initiatives, the SPEAR program is DSS funded, and U.S. diplomatic missions must directly benefit from the program. "A good barometer for a partner nation's level of commitment is when they sign a letter of agreement, which requires them to make numerous long-term obligations," he observed. "A partner nation's commitment is probably the most important factor for a successful program."

Created in 2015, Bamako's 48-man SPEAR team is the most mature. Since the rise of political unrest in 2012, Mali has faced increased terrorism. The team has responded to terrorist attacks and secured the embassy during times of civil unrest. "The Bamako SPEAR officers are leaders among their security force counterparts and have been recognized by countrymen and international partners as the model for success," stated Bamako SPEAR mentor Jeremy Boulware.

In March, assailants with AK-47s and grenades attacked a European Union site just two blocks from the U.S. Embassy. Eight SPEAR team members from the host nation responded within 10 minutes to secure the location, assisted with the search for the terrorists and provided medical attention to a shooting victim.

"When the team came across a wounded national guardsman, our SPEAR medic immediately applied a tourniquet to stop the bleeding until the officer could be transported to the hospital," said Bamako's RSO, Jason Willis. "Given the standard level of emergency care in Mali and the time it takes to get patients to hospitals, it is highly likely that the SPEAR medic saved the man's life."

The SPEAR program provides training for a quick-reaction force, as well as movement security training, a master trainer program and equipment loans. It also coordinates joint readiness exercises, which facilitate collaboration between the host-nation forces and the U.S. managed security at diplomatic facilities. Examples of the latter include the Marine Security Guards, embassy bodyguards, local guard forces and surveillance detection teams.

"SPEAR training focuses on a multipronged, coordinated response to any emergency incident that a U.S. diplomatic facility may face," said Swanberry.

This year, the annual capstone security exercise at Embassy Bamako allowed the RSO, host-nation forces and Department of Defense personnel to drill together, refine response plans and learn improved crisis coordination. Next year, the SPEAR team in Niger will be included in the U.S. Special Operations Command-Africa's Flintlock Exercise, which includes more than 200 military and law enforcement personnel from nine African and Western nations who will train and exercise to improve the coordination and response to crises and threats in West Africa.

Since its founding, the program has evolved to offer an additional focus on motorcade and movement security, and to include development of a training component

| *Cont.* | ▼

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A Bamako SPEAR officer escorts Ambassador Paul Folmsbee, second from right in T-shirt, through the crowd during the annual crepissage in Djenné, central Mali, in April.  
*Department of State photo*



within established SPEAR teams. The Bamako team has led the way in some of these new initiatives by augmenting its traditional embassy security function to include previously challenging assignments. In April, the team provided security during the U.S. and Danish ambassadors' participation in the annual event where thousands of locals gather together each year to plaster Djenné's mud-constructed mosque, located in central Mali. The team traveled nearly 600 kilometers from Bamako to provide security in this location, where local security services were practically nonexistent, and it offered security during the site visits and supported security for the ambassadors' motorcade.

"We see the program as having a wide array of opportunities in the future and hope to expand the program based on its achievements," said Swanberry.

While the program is yielding positive results, challenges remain, including the need to retain SPEAR personnel, said Aronson. "Given that the government and other members of the diplomatic community know the capabilities of the SPEAR officers, on more than one occasion, the officers are pulled to support the president and prime minister of Niger," he explained. "We are pleased that the president of Niger appreciates their skills, but it is always a shame to lose some of our dedicated SPEAR officers." ■



The Bamako SPEAR team trains at the shooting range in March.  
*Department of State photo*



# Granting Forgiveness



## LRA defectors welcomed back into the community

By Candice Helton, public affairs specialist, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations



**Previous photo:** Learning Exchange participants from Niger and Chad gather for a photo in Gulu along with representatives of civil society and the U.S. military.

*State Department photo*

**F**or almost three decades, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) wreaked havoc in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. Formed in 1987 to protest the oppression of northern Uganda by the country's central government, the LRA became synonymous with brutality, child abduction and fear in central Africa.

The American public was introduced to LRA's leader, Joseph Kony, in a 2012 video advocating his capture. It garnered more than 100 million views, boosting awareness of one of the most violent and longest-lasting conflicts in Africa.

Throughout the group's existence, the LRA abducted more than 67,000 men, women and children and displaced more than 1.9 million people in northern Uganda alone. Recruits became child soldiers, sex slaves, porters and couriers, and they mutilated others by cutting off their lips, ears, noses and feet for not complying with LRA demands.

But there is good news: Through the combined efforts of the Ugandan government, U.S. Army Special Operations, the Department of State, the African Union-led Regional Task Force and various NGOs and civil society groups, the LRA has been reduced to approximately 100 combatants, largely by the interagency effort to promote defections. Former combatants are now returning home, seeking acceptance, forgiveness and compassion.

The Department of State prioritizes defeating armed groups such as the LRA by promoting defections, work undertaken by the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization (CSO). The bureau works with host governments to create legal mechanisms for those formerly associated with armed groups to return to their communities. It also supports local governmental, religious and traditional leaders whose reconciliation efforts generate an environment that encourages fighters to quit.

One means is to use information from defectors to identify other disgruntled combatants. Specifically crafted messages are then created and broadcast to entice more individuals to leave the battlefield. By encouraging defections from armed groups, | *Cont.* | ▼



Traditional dancers perform during the reintegration festival.

*State Department photo*



the effort reduces these groups' capabilities, curtails recruitment, damages internal cohesion and reduces their ability to conduct attacks.

While Uganda has successfully promoted defections and reintegrated defectors into society, countries in Africa's Lake Chad Basin are still dealing with the Boko Haram/ISIS-West Africa crisis. The nations of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria have no national strategies or legal frameworks to effectively encourage defections and are looking to learn from Uganda's success. Uganda has encouraged defection and reintegration to such an extent that more than 13,000 former LRA combatants have gotten amnesty and returned to their communities.

To support Niger and Chad's nascent efforts to promote defections and reintegration, CSO and the U.S. Embassy in Kampala conducted a

Lake Chad Basin/Uganda Defections Campaign Learning Exchange in April. The exchange encouraged an open dialogue between Nigeriens and Chadians affected by the Boko Haram/ISIS-West Africa crisis and Ugandan leaders involved in the counter-LRA efforts. The delegations included the secretary general from Niger's Ministry of Justice, a governor, religious leaders, community leaders, NGO representatives and a radio host. All of these participants actively encourage defections and are promoting forgiveness and reintegration of former fighters in their home countries.

During the weeklong event, participants attended workshops and roundtable discussions with defectors and affected communities. They also heard from regional and traditional leaders directly involved in reconciliation efforts and representatives of NGOs working on early warning networks or focused on family tracing and creating messages

that would reach defectors. Attendees discussed formal and informal justice mechanisms with representatives from the Ugandan Amnesty Commission, the government of Uganda and local lawyers. These sessions allowed delegates to gain an in-depth understanding of the legal and social complexities of defections support and the difficulties of reintegration of those formerly associated with armed groups.

One roundtable involved Ugandans who are political, cultural, religious and traditional leaders from four tribes. | *Cont.* | ▼



Members of the delegation to the reintegration festival from Niger and Chad introduce themselves at the event.

*State Department photo*



Also included were defectors and representatives of leading war victims' associations. Together, they identified a disconnect between local- and midlevel government representatives and LRA-affected community members. They also called on governmental representatives to reach out proactively to defectors and communities struggling to accept defectors and said defectors need to engage their local government and get involved in organizations such as victims' assistance associations. "This was the first dialogue to bring together the four LRA-affected population groups," opening up a dialogue between tribes and government officials that had not existed before, observed CSO's field representative in Kampala, Salamah Magnuson.

The Learning Exchange culminated with a Reintegration Festival that drew 4,000 participants to commemorate the unity, peace and forgiveness of former defectors. CSO coordinated the festival, which provided an opportunity for the community to strengthen Uganda's capacity to welcome defectors home and celebrate their unified strength.

At the event, a Ugandan participant said the festival helped "fight stigma, build resilience and restore hope." There, children recited a poem in English describing what peace means to them, and traditional dancers entertained the crowd. To thank the United States for supporting the counter-LRA mission, children from northern Uganda presented a gift of peace art to Andrew Lentz, the embassy's political section chief.

Those affected by the LRA are rebuilding their lives in part by forgiving defectors who have repented and accepting their return to their communities. The Reintegration Festival amplified the effort to reintegrate former fighters into their home communities and encourage these communities to work together for development. Promoting defections from violent extremist organizations and other armed groups can reduce these groups as much or more than combat operations, but this effort calls for efforts to reintegrate defectors into civilian life and their communities. Uganda's success in supporting defections and reintegrating LRA defectors is a practice other countries are looking to replicate to promote a return to peace. ■



An Embassy Kampala representative at left, poses with the children's peace art. *State Department photo*



# Doors to Opportunity

## Consular sections booming in China

By Erik Finch, consular officer, U.S. Consulate General in Shenyang, China



Since re-establishing diplomatic relations 40 years ago, China has become the United States' largest consular mission, as measured by the nonimmigrant visa (NIV) volume of almost 2.5 million NIVs per year (in addition to the tens of thousands of immigrant visas, passports and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad). Behind the enormous workload, though, is the deeper story of how hundreds of FSOs and consular fellows serving at Mission China's six posts deal with the challenge daily. | *Cont.* | ▼



In the country's capital, Beijing, for example, where the modern embassy opened in 2008, the consular section processes thousands of visa applicants each day, promoting cultural exchange, tourism and business travel to the United States. Due to unabated demand for U.S. citizen and visa services, prompted by the 10-year reciprocal-visa validity agreement of 2014, the existing facility couldn't handle the workload, and the American Citizens Services unit moved into a new, expanded space in 2016. Meanwhile, the NIV Unit is undergoing a major renovation that will almost double capacity by late 2017.

Consulate General Shenyang is a short four-hour train ride from Beijing on the country's ultra-modern bullet train. With a reputation for harsh winters and hearty food, Shenyang is not as cosmopolitan as Beijing or Shanghai, but has its own mix of cultures, including a large Koreatown enclave. The China-North Korea border region has a culture and economy all its own, and there's much history to explore in Shenyang, a provincial capital with many of the amenities of a large, modern city. Shenyang's consular section is slated to move to a new off-site consular facility in the summer of 2018. The section, therefore, will be well situated to handle increasing numbers of visa applicants and serve American citizens residing in northeast China.

Meanwhile, the consulate facility at the Consulate General in Shanghai, much like the planned facility in Shenyang, is located near a downtown shopping mall offering easy access for applicants. The consular section is one of the world's busiest visa-issuing posts, and its workload continues to grow, making it a great location to master management and leadership. One officer in the section, Danette Sullivan, said she's had an extraordinary experience involving "wonderful people, fabulous food and amazing colleagues."

Consulate General Guangzhou's region, located in the southeast part of the nation, has seen dramatic change in just a few short decades. A manufacturing center, Guangzhou and its home province of Guangdong have benefited greatly from China's manufacturing sector growth. The current consular building opened in the summer of 2013, making it Mission China's newest purpose-built facility. Guangzhou is also Mission China's largest operation by NIV workload, eclipsing even Shanghai and Beijing. As the sole processing location for all immigrant visas in Mission China, Guangzhou provides officers with insights into the connections between American and Chinese citizens. | *Cont.* | ▼





Attendees at Consular Leadership Day 2017 pose for a photo in Beijing.

*State Department photo*

In sum, Guangzhou is what one sign calls a Thousand-Year Trade City, a trade hub connecting Hong Kong and Macau with other parts of China, and a dynamic and vibrant place that's changing so quickly it can be unrecognizable to those who served there only a few years ago.

Consulate General Chengdu covers an area reaching from the Himalayas to the jungles bordering Burma, one of the most ethnically and geographically diverse districts in China. There, the work is fast-paced, interesting and policy-relevant, and takes officers to exotic locations such as Shangri-La and Tibet. Officers and local staff regularly venture out into the consular district, which is comparable in size to the southwestern United States. The post's American Citizens Services chief recently traveled to a distant section of Tibet for the first official consular visit to the region. Chengdu holds some of China's most iconic attractions, including everybody's favorite, the giant panda breeding facility, and offers hiking opportunities too. Consular Chief Clark Ledger said, "We find excellent ways to work off those extra calories consumed from Sichuan cuisine."

The sixth post, the U.S. Consulate General in Wuhan, opened in 2008 as the first new U.S. Consulate to open in mainland China since the 1980s. The facility will get new office space in the summer of 2018 and will provide full services for U.S. citizens and individuals applying for NIVs. | *Cont.* | ▼





Members of Consulate General Shanghai's Pink and Green Team pose during a team-building activity. Shanghai's consular section is divided into teams, each labeled with a color. *State Department photo*

As such, officers serving in Wuhan in coming years will get to shape the nature and extent of the United States' influence in central China, where there's a long U.S. relationship with the region. (A consulate in Wuhan existed from 1863 until its closure in 1949 and, during World War II, even served as the U.S. Embassy for a period.) Consular Chief Terry Mobley said his family's favorite school, of the many on their tours, is the International School in Wuhan. "If you like working in places that are dynamic and rapidly developing, as I do, then Wuhan certainly is 'the real Foreign Service,'" he added.

While China is a country having some of the world's most modern cities and some of the world's most remote regions, a place where you can see the future while experiencing customs and traditions unchanged in thousands of years, it's also a country with which the United States has inextricable cultural, social and economic bonds. For those reasons and more, service in Mission China's consular sections offers FSOs the opportunity to operate at the forefront of diplomacy in the 21st century. ■



# Oral Histories

## Program preserves U.S. diplomats' stories

By Judith R. Barood, executive director, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training

**W**ant to know what it was like at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, as the post was being overrun by revolutionaries in 1979? Consider the words of former U.S. diplomat John Limbert, as captured in his oral history by the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST). “First they were outside the main building and then they got into the main building,” Limbert recalled. “They broke a window, and they pulled out some bars. They found a vulnerable spot ... pulled out some bars and got into the chancery basement. The Marines tried to slow them down with tear gas ... We got everybody onto the second floor of the building, behind a steel door ... Eventually they got up the stairs, were outside the steel door.”

Limbert’s statement is just one of the more than 2,000 oral history interviews the ADST has captured since 1983. The world’s largest such collection, the histories can be found on [www.adst.org](http://www.adst.org) and the Library of Congress website.

A staff led by retired FSO Susan Johnson runs the nonprofit ADST, whose board is chaired by Philip Hughes. Most interviews are conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy and Mark Tauber, using the historic



Posed in May at Cottage I at FSI are, from left, Mark Tauber, oral historian; Susan Johnson, ADST president; Charles Stuart Kennedy, ADST senior historian; two delegates from South Korea's National Diplomatic Academy; and Marilyn Bentley, manager of the oral history archive.

*Photo by Judith Barood*

| *Cont.* | ▼

| 1 of 4 |



Sears-style cottage on FSI's grounds. Retired Foreign Service consular officers Kennedy and Victor Wolf founded the program in 1986, which was originally housed at George Washington University. Then, in 1988, Kennedy said he saw a new opportunity with ADST, which was seeking "exhibits with the idea of setting up a Foreign Service museum, and [to] do some oral histories."

The Department of State housed ADST at FSI and the Bureau of Human Resources provided an FSO slot for its executive director. The oral history collection preserves FSOs' stories such as that of Ambassador Prudence Bushnell, who was chief of mission in Nairobi when Osama bin Laden's terrorists blew up the embassy in 1998, killing 212 people.

Recalling that day, Bushnell in her oral history recalled suddenly hearing "an incredible noise and huge percussion [that] threw me off my feet. I'll never know whether I totally lost consciousness or whether I was semiconscious, but I was very aware of the shaking of the building. I thought the building was going to collapse, and I was pretty sure I was going to die. I was physically steeling myself for a fall. I vaguely remember a shadow, like a white cloud, moving past me, and the rattle of the tea cup."

ADST seeks to capture, preserve and share with the public U.S. diplomats' experiences, aiming to enrich diplomats' professional knowledge and strengthen public appreciation of diplomacy's contribution to America's national interests. The oral histories help to dispel stereotypes of the Foreign Service by presenting first-person accounts that illustrate the joys, complexities and hazards of representing the U.S. overseas. Such was the case of Joseph Wilson, deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, who worked to get U.S. diplomats out of Kuwait after Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard forces invaded in August 1990.

| *Cont.* | ▼



Charles Stuart Kennedy founded the oral history program and is ADST's senior historian.  
Photo by Judith Baroody



He recalls how “the Iraqis had annexed Kuwait, and they were continually moving in a threatening fashion around the embassy compound. They were looting embassy houses around town. I would get calls saying [the Iraqis] were going to take over the embassy tonight and that I needed to do something to stop them.” After a long standoff, the American diplomats were finally permitted to evacuate from the embassy and left Kuwait on private and chartered flights.

ADST collects the oral histories in a way that’s as stress-free for the interviewee as possible. Usually, retired foreign affairs personnel talk about their lives and careers with a historian, who guides them with questions. The interviewee then signs a “deed of gift and agreement” transferring the history’s rights to ADST to publish in any manner that will advance its educational aims. However, the interviewee may also publish their story separately.

Some of the FSOs’ stories are lighthearted, and some are harrowing. The latter is true for the story of Bruce Flatin, political counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul when U.S. Ambassador Adolph “Spike” Dubs was kidnapped and later murdered in 1979.

“I traveled to the Kabul Hotel with a couple of other people from the embassy,” he recalled. “We were told that terrorists had seized the ambassador... It struck us as odd that the terrorists would come to a hotel in the center of town to hole up with the ambassador. Soviet embassy people were there as well. I was talking to the Soviet official and the Afghan police and military leadership on the scene. They told me that these people were demanding the release of some anti-regime people in return for Ambassador Dubs.” Tragically, Ambassador Dubs was killed when Afghan police stormed the hotel room where he was held.

When finished, the recording of an oral history interview is sent to a transcriber, who sends the transcription back to the interviewee for editing. It’s then posted online in its entirety. The histories also may be excerpted via podcasts on the ADST website, such as “Moments in U.S. Diplomatic History,” which highlights significant events or aspects of statecraft, and “Fascinating Figures,” which has short write-ups on diplomats whose careers were distinguished or unusual. One of these is the career of Melissa Foelsch Wells, a four-time ambassador who was among the pioneers paving the way for women to rise in the Foreign Service.



The author, left, poses with Ambassador Melissa Foelsch Wells, whose oral history was recorded by ADST. *Photo by Richard Krueger*



Among her pre-FSO jobs was work as a showgirl in Las Vegas. Recalling that time, Wells said “The pay was good and [my] plan was to continue my university education at Georgetown University and then join the Foreign Service. So I gritted my teeth and learned to do high kicks in shoes with three-inch heels. The first few nights in Vegas were awful for me. Thank goodness, because of my height, I was in the back row. Two shows a night and three on Saturdays for six weeks finally solved the problem.”

Those interviewed come from all ranks of retired FSOs, as well as their spouses, Foreign Service specialists, Civil Service officers and Foreign Service nationals. Historian Tauber recently even began a project to interview personnel from USAID and the Foreign Commercial Service. The stories drawn from them have a worldwide audience and are used as teaching material by universities and FSI.

Many of the interviews illuminate aspects of diplomatic mastery. Public Diplomacy Officer Lloyd Neighbors, for example, found a creative way to convey information about the United States to audiences in China despite that nation’s strict censorship—he used music. “I was able to discuss sensitive topics that needed to be understood by Chinese students and the general public as well,” he recalled. His lecture, a short history of the United States as seen through popular music, was called “America: the Dream and the Reality,” and drew on American literature as well. “I began with [Jay] Gatsby and the green light at the end of Daisy Buchanan’s boat dock [in the novel “The Great Gatsby”]. I wound the story through songs about whalers and loggers and cowboys, [including] Railroad Bill and John Henry, [and union leader] Joe Hill and the copper bosses ...”

All of the ADST’s histories are on the organization’s website, for pleasure reading and academic research. Retirees from the U.S. foreign affairs community are also invited to volunteer to be interviewed for their oral history by ADST. ■



Cottage I on the grounds of FSI is the home of ADST and the site where most of the oral history interviews take place.

*Photo by Judith Baroody*



# Shenyang

Consulate General serves multifaceted northern China

By Luke Bruns, Catherine Channell and Barbara Grub, consular officers, U.S. Consulate in Shenyang





Depending on the date you arrive in Shenyang, you will face either sweltering summer heat—or frigid and short winter days. Regardless, you will dodge taxis swerving along streets (and sometimes sidewalks) while simultaneously being tempted by the aromatic smells of the ubiquitous “chuanr” stands, which offer roasting skewers of every variety of meat, side dishes of vegetables drenched in oil and copious amounts of the local Harbin beer. Known for their heartiness and straightforward attitude, the people of the “Dongbei,” China’s northeast, know that with the proper sustenance, they can overcome any challenge.

Home to a multitude of ethnic groups, northeast China was once the government center to many minorities and the base of the Manchu Kingdom. The Manchus established the Qing dynasty in 1644 after conquering the vast territory of China and ruled the Middle Kingdom for more than two centuries. The last Qing dynasty emperor, Puyi (Aisin Gioro, Xuantong Emperor), came to the throne at age 3 in 1908 and did not abdicate until 1917. In the 1930s, he assumed the title of chief executive of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo.

After the fall of the Qing and the Warlord era’s end, the Chinese Communists used the northeast provinces as their staging ground to combat the Chinese Nationalists during the Chinese civil war. Following establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Mao Zedong pushed for migration of Chinese to the northeast, hoping to create an agrarian breadbasket and develop the “Great Northern Wilderness.” Though history has been less than kind regarding the outcome of this forced migration, the result was an increase of population in the northeast from 20 million prior to World War II to more than 100 million by the end of the 20th century.

| Cont. | ▼



Shenyang’s Consular Section staff are all smiles in Beiling Park on consular leadership Day 2017.

Photo by Dan Qing Li





An aerial view of one of the many neighborhoods within Shenyang.  
*Photo by Dan Qing Li*



The area has been affected heavily by neighboring nations throughout its history, and the influence is clear in local architecture and buildings. In the late 1800s and first half of the 1900s, for example, Korea, Japan and Russia all entered the northeast, seeking land, resources, trade routes and influence over China. Both Russia and Japan laid railways to facilitate trade, and the main train station in Shenyang is a physical reminder of this era. Architectural relics in cities and towns around the region include Russian Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches; vibrant Korean neighborhoods; and Japanese hotels and government buildings. The political history of the “Dongbei” region is apparent to those who walk its streets.

But northeast China is also a showcase of the nation’s modernization. Apartments and shopping centers are being built at an insatiable pace. The Shenyang Imperial Palace, constructed in 1625 as the seat of the Qing dynasty, is now surrounded by towering glass citadels offering such luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Armani. Affluent members of the community drive Mercedes-Benz and Audi cars, and send their children to study abroad in increasing numbers. While heavily reliant on state-owned enterprises, the region overall is more urbanized than most of China. It was the first region of the country to develop heavy industry and has abundant coal and metal reserves. Major cities include Shenyang, Dalian, Harbin, Changchun, Anshan and Daqing, which are built around the equipment manufacturing, steel, automobile, shipbuilding, aircraft manufacturing and petroleum refining industries.

However, this once-booming industrial heartland may turn out to be ground zero for the feared hard landing of the Chinese economy. The stagnation of northeast China’s heavy industry-based economy has deepened as



Consul General Greg May, third from left, participates in a groundbreaking ceremony for an off-site consular facility in Shenyang.

*Photo by Liu Ce*

the country’s economy continues to liberalize and privatize. In recent years, the Chinese central government has initiated the “Revitalize the Northeast” campaign to improve policy coordination and integration, hoping to stave off its economic troubles. In 2016, Liaoning province, where the U.S. Consulate General in Shenyang is located, was the first province to report a negative growth rate, far from the stated national growth rate of 6.7 percent.

With 42 American and 131 Chinese employees, Consulate General Shenyang represents the United States in the three northeast China provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang and covers more than 306,000 square miles, an area almost twice the size of the American Northeast. Originally opened in 1904, the consulate closed in 1949 after the Communist Party, newly in power, placed then Consul General Angus Ward and his staff under house arrest for several months before expelling them. | *Cont.* | ▼





A food vendor roasts corn at a streetside stall on Central Road in Shenyang.

*Photo by Dan Qing Li*

Following the establishment of diplomatic ties between the United States and the People's Republic of China in 1979, Consulate General Shenyang reopened in 1984 and now houses the operations of the Department of State, Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) and Agricultural Trade Office (ATO). Once thought of as a small backwater post, Consulate General Shenyang is now an exciting place that's surging with growth. Despite the transition from one-year-validity visas to the 10-year, multiple-entry type, visa demand in China continues to soar. Consulate General Shenyang issues an average of 11,000 nonimmigrant visas

per month, making it one of the highest-volume visa-issuing posts in the world. The sheer size of the district gives the public affairs section a never-ending audience, and its personnel have been known to jump from one train directly to another when traveling between cities around the region. While the economic woes of the northeast have spelled trouble for China's state-backed industries, the region has also opened the door for foreign investment, an opportunity not being wasted by the political/economic section or FCS, and ATO personnel. The increasing scope of operations has led to the groundbreaking of a new off-site consular section that will open in | *Cont.* | ▼





A Paifang marks the entrance to the residence of Zhang Zoulin, who was the warlord of Manchuria from 1916–1928.  
*Photo by Dan Qing Li*



late 2018 and increase the number of visa interview and American Citizens Services windows from a seven to 28. A newly remodeled American Center at the consulate will soon follow, allowing for expanded public affairs activities on consulate grounds.

With the entire China-North Korean border situated within northeast China, and approximately 90 percent of North Korea's trade being with China, consulate personnel often find themselves working on projects and cases that extend into the so-called "Hermit Kingdom." The consulate is often the first to know of developments and shifts in the region's economic and political situation and to gain reports on the effects of ongoing sanctions or the plight of Americans detained by North Korea. Ratcheting tensions have only increased the demand for the consulate's services.

The consulate's small American staff and its broad work priorities ensure every staff member can gain expanded portfolios outside of his or her assigned duties. First- and second-tour officers comprise a quarter of the American hires at post, and entry-level officers quickly find themselves deep into the heart of all operations. Whether they're traveling by train for 14 hours to far-flung cities on the Sino-Russian border or working with sections and agencies throughout the consulate, consulate staff members are never bored. "With fewer officers than many other places, each officer can take on a meaty portfolio and really pitch in. I can't imagine officers at many other posts being given so much responsibility in their first tour," commented former Consular Officer Jeremy Chan.

Although the consulate's workload can be demanding, it also leads to a tight-knit relationship between American and local staff. Officers and staff of all sections have the opportunity to get to know each other, and all ranks and backgrounds work together. "Since we're a small post, you'll get to know most people working here and hear about their experiences in the Department of State," Consular Officer Connor Myers observed.



Tourist walk through an archway leading to the inner city of the Qing Dynasty Imperial Palace in Shenyang.  
Photo by Dan Qing Li

The consulate's location also offers access to such amenities as the celebrated annual Harbin Snow and Ice festival or trips to Dandong and Yanji to see North Korea from across the Yalu and Tumen Rivers. In the city of Shenyang, restaurants and stores come and go rapidly, making every weekend a new chance to explore a once-familiar neighborhood. "Life in Shenyang has a somewhat looser feel than life in other large Chinese cities. You never know what you will find around the next corner," joked Deputy Consular Chief Erik Finch. A newly arrived American quickly learns that knowing how to play mahjong is a must during their tour, as is being able to belt out at least one karaoke song—though holding a tune is not a requirement.

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| 7 of 9 | ▼





The consul general's wife, Margaret May, seated with microphone, participates in a panel discussion at the Art is Borderless event in Shenyang in June.  
Photo by Liu Ce

Consulate General Shenyang management at all levels is concerned with the comfort of arriving families. Housing options here include either multibedroom apartments or row-house-style homes, all furnished with modern Western-style utilities. Though some families home-school children, there are three international schools available. Due to the lack of a bilateral work agreement with China, employment options outside the consulate are limited. However, eligible family members will find open positions in several sections, assignments that post management will try to fill.

Northeast China may seem an out of the way place, but Consulate General Shenyang's role within China and within Asian regional relations is undeniable and long-term. "Washington pays very close attention to the issues we are following here in Shenyang," said Consul General Gregory May. "We are in a strategically important area yet one where relatively few Americans live and visit. This is a great place to learn about China and China's relations with its northeastern neighbors." ■



A woman carries sparklers during Chinese New Year celebrations in Shenyang.

Photo by Yun Long Bai



**At a Glance**

**China**



**Capital:**  
Beijing

**Government Type:**  
Chinese Communist Party

**Area:**  
9,596,960 sq km

**Area comparative:**  
Slightly smaller than the U.S.

**Population:**  
1,373,541,278 (July 2016 est.)

**Ethnic groups:**  
Han Chinese 91.6%, Zhuang 1.3%, other (includes Hui, Manchu, Uighur, Miao, Yi, Tujia, Tibetan, Mongol, Dong, Buyei, Yao, Bai, Korean, Hani, Li, Kazakh, Dai and other nationalities) 7.1%

**Languages:**  
Standard Chinese or Mandarin (official; Putonghua, based on the Beijing dialect), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghainese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, Hakka dialects, minority languages (see Ethnic groups entry)

**Note:** Zhuang is official in Guangxi Zhuang, Yue is official in Guangdong, Mongolian is official in Nei Mongol, Uighur is official in Xinjiang Uygur, Kyrgyz is official in Xinjiang Uygur, and Tibetan is official in Xizang (Tibet)



**Religions:**  
Buddhist 18.2%, Christian 5.1%, Muslim 1.8%, folk religion 21.9%, Hindu < 0.1%, Jewish < 0.1%, other 0.7% (includes Daoist (Taoist)), unaffiliated 52.2%

**Exports (commodities):**  
electrical and other machinery, including data processing equipment, apparel, furniture, textiles, integrated circuits

**Exports Partners:**  
U.S. 18%, Hong Kong 14.6%, Japan 6%, South Korea 4.5% (2015)

**Imports:**  
electrical and other machinery, oil and mineral fuels; nuclear reactor; boiler; and machinery components; optical and medical equipment; metal ores; motor vehicles; soybeans

**Imports Partners:**  
South Korea 10.9%, U.S. 9%, Japan 8.9%, Germany 5.5%, Australia 4.1% (2015)

**Currency:**  
Renminbi

**Internet country code:**  
.cn

\* The CIA World Factbook



# Financial Management Specialists

New officers spend their first tours domestically

Compiled and edited by Joseph A. Kenny, executive director, Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services





In 2015, there was a shortage of entry-level Financial Management Officer (FMO) positions overseas. Faced with the prospect of not being able to hire FMOs up to the projected attrition level, CGFS (home bureau for FMOs) enlisted the assistance of the Office of the Director General. Through this collaborative effort, we were able to hire six additional FMOs using training positions, thus ensuring we continued hiring to attrition. This would prevent future bottlenecks in Foreign Service FMO promotions, staffing shortages and gaps, and other adverse impacts posed by this deficit. The comptroller, Chris Flaggs, and his team developed a formal rotation program to optimize the training and development of the six FMOs so when they entered on duty overseas, they would be well prepared and confident to serve. They will have developed contacts and met subject matter experts to assist in the most difficult of challenges that they will face when they are sole practitioners at post.

The group of six was divided in two: One group of three was assigned to CGFS in Charleston and the other three were assigned to Washington, D.C. (CGFS) and the Bureau of Budget and Planning (BP). During their two-year assignments, the FMOs rotated through various divisions in CGFS and BP. The duration of each rotation varied anywhere from three to seven months, depending on the nature and complexity of the subject matter. In addition to obtaining an overview of the Department's operational goals and strategies, the employees also processed transactions that originated from embassies and consulates, such as foreign currency purchases, resolved compensation issues, certified vouchers for payment, reviewed Time and Attendance submissions, and examined allotment accounting transactions. Many of the projects that the FMOs worked on had Department-wide impact. For example, one edited the Department of State's award-winning 2016 Agency Financial Report. Others traveled to posts for cashier monitoring reviews or to present at workshops, while others gained intra- and interagency exposure, liaising with Treasury, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Congress.

The first group of FMOs (Michael Jackson, David Rosenberg, Ibrahim Koroma, Ronald [Jay] Kryk, Daniel Dagley and Hare O'Donnell) enthusiastically embraced this opportunity, played key roles in fine-tuning the program with positive and constructive feedback, and paved the way for their successors for the 2017–2019 cycle.

**Michael Jackson said:**

“My assignment to Charleston turned out to be a great first tour. I started in the Post Support Unit (PSU) of CGFS. I found it to be the perfect area to understand how CGFS in general and PSU in particular support overseas posts in the financial realm. I got a feel for what some of the work at post will be like for an FMO and was also able to work on important projects to help further PSU's and CGFS's missions to provide world-class service for overseas posts and regional bureaus. After PSU, I rotated through Global Compensation, Financial Operations/Post Allotment Accounting, Customer Service and Training, and Global Disbursement. In my last rotation with Global Disbursing, I



accompanied a CGFS/Paris-based cashier monitor on a site visit to the U.S. Embassy in Kigali for their five-year review.

“Through each of the rotations I built a valuable network of talented women and men that I will be sure to call on when I am overseas (my next posting is FMO at U.S. Embassy Bamako). I also met senior leadership in Management, as well as consulted with FMOs transferring to posts throughout the world. I gained in-depth knowledge of financial systems and processes being used domestically and overseas. Additionally, I took training courses at the Charleston CGFS center at no extra cost to the Department—where I met other FSOs and Locally Employed staff. The skills I learned and the contacts I made will serve me well through my career as an FMO, whether overseas or domestically.”

**Jay Kryk said:**

“One joins the Foreign Service to go overseas. So I was a bit apprehensive as to how being assigned domestically for my first tour would affect my career. However, I can say this tour was rewarding and fulfilling. During this tour I gained a better understanding of the State Department culture, and learned about CGFS and the role it plays and the services it provides to embassies overseas. The biggest advantage was forming the network of outstanding professionals and I have developed the confidence gained that I can rely on when issues arise abroad. Being the first cohort to go through the rotation program, there were the usual kinks to be ironed out, but kudos to our HR Specialist Marcy Singleton for working tirelessly on our behalf to resolve them and refine the program for the next cohort. Finally, a big thank you to all the Foreign Service Specialists here at CGFS who provided mentoring and who patiently answered our numerous questions regarding the FMO position and life in the Foreign Service.”

**David Rosenberg said:**

“Typically when one joins the Foreign Service as a Financial Management Specialist, they receive 13 weeks of orientation and specialized training, and then it is off to post to manage an embassy’s finances. Coming from the private sector and learning how the State Department runs its financial operations can be a bit daunting. My first assignment as a Foreign Service specialist provided a rare opportunity to learn the hows and whys of financial management, before actually going to post.

“I have spent the past two years rotating among different financial departments, and have learned best practices to utilize when I am overseas. I also learned how to detect and avoid making common mistakes. However, the greatest thing that I learned during this domestic assignment is that I have many people standing behind me with a vested interest in my success. I have had the luxury of hands-on experience with some of the systems and gained an understanding of why we do certain things the way we do. With the friends that I have made along the way and having a strong support system for problem resolution, I feel very prepared as I transfer to my first overseas assignment in Accra, Ghana.”





**Ibrahim H. Koroma said:**

“Six of us were the vanguard in the pilot rotational program. My first tour was with the Bureau of Budget and Planning (BP) specifically in the Office of Resource Planning and Budget Information group (RPBI) and the Resource Strategy and Liaison team (RS&L). I was pleasantly surprised at how involved these teams are in coordinating the resource needs of the Department. I had the opportunity to work closely with both the Director of BP and the Director of RPBI, and accompanied them to testify before the Senate Committee on the FY 2016 Foreign Operations and Related Programs Budget. I experienced firsthand both the political and technical aspects of how the Department obtains its funding from the Legislative branch.

“Later I spent my last rotation in the Funds Control and Reimbursement office. There I was assigned the Overseas Building Operations and Protection of Foreign Missions Operations accounts. There I apportioned and allotted billions of dollars over a period of one year, and I interacted with OMB and U.S. Treasury staff during a typical work day. In BP I was a member of a very unique and effective team committed to fulfilling BP’s mission. Overall, my tour in BP was very rewarding and fulfilling.”

During their two-year tenure, the FMOs also participated in a variety of cross-training seminars, brown bag lunches with their peers, and webinars. These provided added context to complement their exposure to and understanding of the Department from the inside outward. As the first group prepare for their move overseas, CGFS wishes them “fair winds and following seas.” ■



Ibrahim H. Koroma lauded the rotation program for showing how the teams he worked with are coordinating the Department’s resource needs.

*Photo courtesy of Ibrahim Koroma*



David Rosenberg said last two years of rotating among different financial departments gave him knowledge of best practices.

*Photo courtesy of David Rosenberg*



Hare O'Donnell was a member of the group of new FMOs who did two-year stateside rotations.

*Photo courtesy of Hare O'Donnell*





# **FAST TIMES**

**Mission Pakistan fosters ELOs' development**

By Abdel Perera and Jacob Rocca, vice consuls, Mission Pakistan

| 1 of 4 |



**P**rograms for first- and second-tour (FAST) officers foster professional development, but priority staffing posts (PSPs) such as Mission Pakistan also require such officers to work hard for long hours. That, in addition to the rapid turnover of one-year tours, can reduce FAST officers' time for development activities. Despite these limitations, Mission Pakistan's FAST program promotes skills development with activities throughout the year. These include professional development workshops, panel discussions, small-group gatherings with mission leadership, mentoring sessions, and social and volunteering activities. The breadth of these activities prepares officers to take on greater responsibility at higher levels.

The mission's approach to professional development reflects the circumstances of working at PSPs. For instance, Mission Pakistan recently held a missionwide professional development workshop for early-career officers that compressed a season's worth of activities into a single day. In that workshop and other activities, the post included more than just entry-level officers (ELO). Having a larger group supports the natural rise of professional networking and mentoring relationships. While such programs should dovetail with the mission's goals, mission leadership ensures the development program is itself among those goals. The result: the Mission Pakistan Development Program, which serves as a roadmap for professional development.

Recently, the ambassador and deputy chief of mission championed a missionwide professional development workshop for FAST and FAST-Plus officers. Coordinators planned the workshop to benefit those who self-identified as "early-career generalists and specialists." This included FAST officers and some officers in their third and fourth tours. The workshop featured development events and receptions hosted by



Management Officer Megan Salmon praises her mentor for providing constant advice, support, and feedback, which makes her a better officer, colleague and supervisor.

*State Department photo*

**Previous Photo:** FAST-Plus workshop participants pose with DCM Jonathan G. Pratt, center in purple tie, and Pakistan Additional Secretary Asad Khan, at Pratt's right.

*State Department photos*



the ambassador and the DCM. In total, 26 mission officers attended, as did more than 30 mid- and senior-level colleagues who joined as speakers and mentors.

The workshop addressed how to expand one's regional expertise, develop professional skills and network with colleagues from across Mission Pakistan. Participants heard from Ambassador David Hale about the U.S. goals in Pakistan and the impact of the new administration on the bilateral relationship. Next, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Additional Secretary Asad Khan discussed his long career as an envoy to the United States and shared his perspective on U.S.-Pakistan relations.

The program addressed professional skills and career advice and also featured sessions on the interagency role in advancing the bilateral relationship, one on security and one on development assistance. There was a panel discussion on management skills featuring midlevel officers and a panel of senior local staff who reflected on their experiences working with American supervisors. The next day, participants visited a local culture museum, a rare and welcomed outing given our security restrictions.

Workshop participants strengthened their professional networks through interactions with midlevel colleagues that included a "speed-dating" lunch that brought mentors and workshop participants together informally and overcame barriers of rank and formality. The FAST participants also hosted members of the diplomatic corps at a reception, where the ambassador and workshop participants interacted with foreign early career diplomats.



Political Officer Dorian Molina chats with with Public Diplomacy Officer Katherine Ntiamoah about how the mentorship program has been an invaluable tool in sharpening officers' professional skills.

*State Department photo*

To improve Mission Pakistan's mentorship program, FAST officers in Islamabad earlier this year held a focus group on mentoring and decided that structured, prescriptive mentorship initiatives tend to fail. They said this is because they feel artificial, involve matchmaking that rarely connects people effectively and are overly rigid, deflating interest in the relationship. Instead, the group concluded that, in any mentor program, mentors and mentees should informally choose each other. Professional development initiatives for junior and senior officers should also occur in less

| *Cont.* | ▼



structured environments, to promote natural development of mentor-mentee relationships.

Mission Pakistan is also experimenting with a missionwide mentor list. Midlevel officers volunteered to be on the list, which summarized the potential mentors' areas of interest and experience. The list was then made available to early-career officers, with prospective mentors agreeing to maintain open-door access to officers who want guidance or an informal chat. Thus, FAST officers can decide whether to meet regularly with a single mentor or to meet with various colleagues, based on their topics of interest.

At priority staffing posts, staff work in a high-pressure, limited-time environment, and rarely have time for professional development. Nonetheless, early-career officers can seek key skills and gain broad experience if they merge development activities with their mission's goals.

Mission Pakistan's development program has the support of the ambassador and DCM and is based on a simple structure, and participation is voluntary. However, completion of it ensures a breadth of experience during an officer's short tour in Pakistan. One reason is that the program involves a checklist of milestones that's modeled after those of the Department's senior threshold Career Development Program. Another is that officers complete a series of core and elective activities during their tour, each supporting their post's work. For example, FAST officers are encouraged to serve as control officers, duty officers and grants review committee members, as well as assist in planning outreach events. FAST officers can also gain interagency experience by serving on employment, housing, employee association and property boards.

Early-career officers at PSPs have the same development needs as those at other posts, and while their work differs, they can thrive if leadership promotes professional development. Done right, the burden on leadership is slight, and a senior officer's mentoring can catalyze junior officers to create their own opportunities, to the benefit of the mission and Department. ■



DCM Jonathan G. Pratt says Mission Pakistan's FAST program benefits from participants whose ideas for activities have been as creative and insightful as the members. *State Department photo*



# EMBASSY STICKYSTAN SOCIAL SPONSOR GUIDANCE

MAKE NEW ARRIVALS FEEL WELCOME RIGHT AWAY-  
WHEN LEAVING THE AIRPORT, DISCREETLY KEEP  
CLEAR OF THE TREES WITH THE MORE  
AGGRESSIVE MONKEYS.



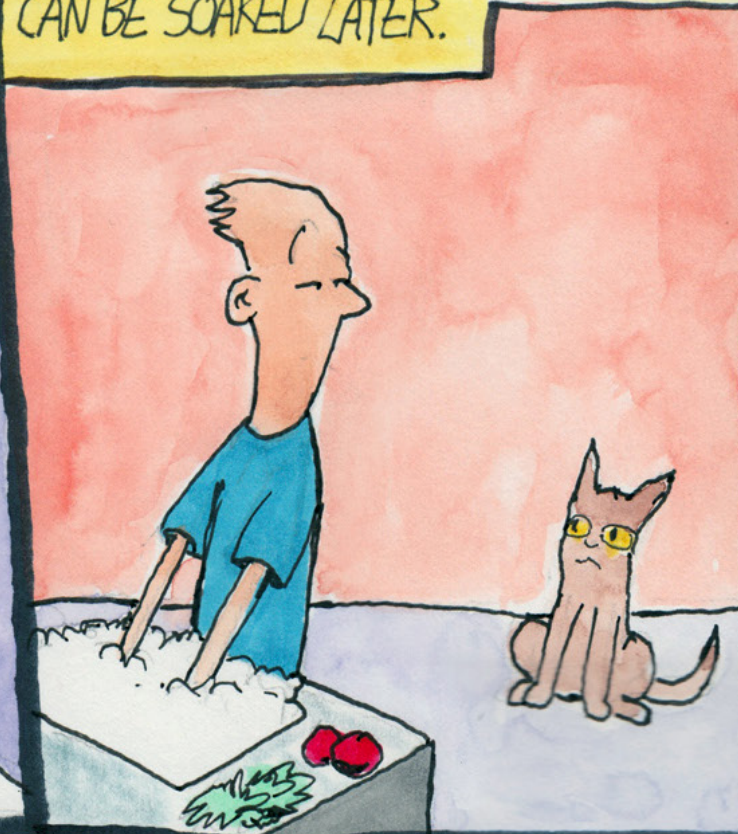
CHECK MOSQUITO NETTING IN THEIR  
RESIDENCE - IF HOLES ARE BIGGER  
THAN A BASKETBALL, REQUEST LARGER  
RAT TRAPS FROM GSO.



IT'S NICE TO LEAVE SOMETHING IN THE  
FRIDGE - NOT/NOT HAMSTER MILK (UNLESS  
THEY'VE REQUESTED IT). REMEMBER IT TAKES  
TIME TO APPRECIATE LOCAL DELICACIES.



IMMEDIATELY SOAK ALL VEGETABLES  
IN BLEACH - NEWLY ARRIVED PETS  
CAN BE SOAKED LATER.



AND POINT OUT ALL RELEVANT SAFETY  
GUIDELINES AT THE EMBASSY.



AGGELER 2017

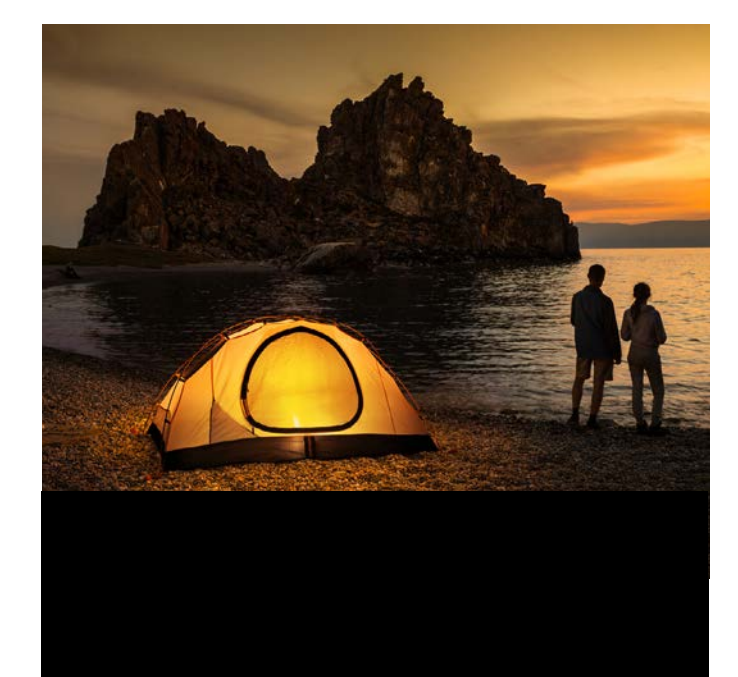
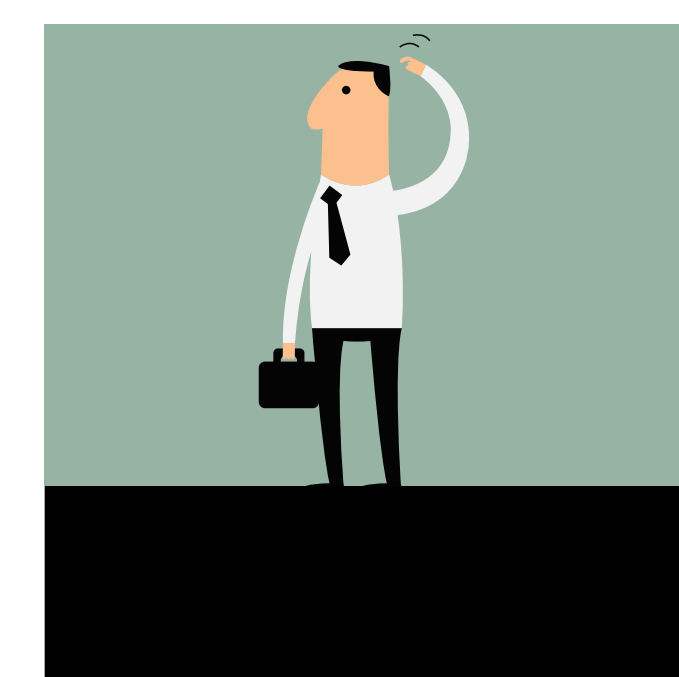


## Sultan's Gift Reflects Oman's Relationship



Ambassador to Oman Marc J. Sievers displays the gift he received in June from Oman's head of state, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, memorializing the longstanding ties between the U.S. and Oman. A painting on the plaque depicts the landing in New York in 1840 by the sultan's envoy, the first Arab diplomat accredited to the United States. ■

*Photo by Daniel A. Durazo*



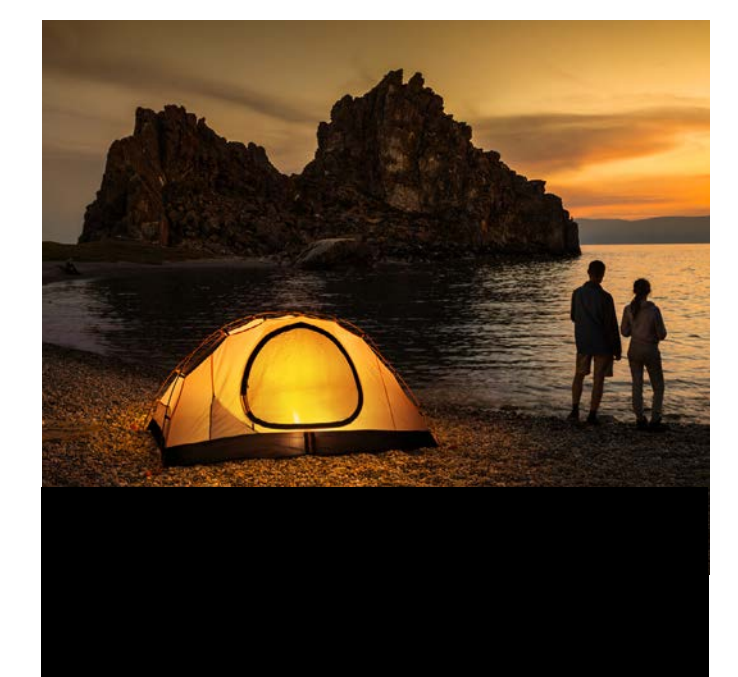
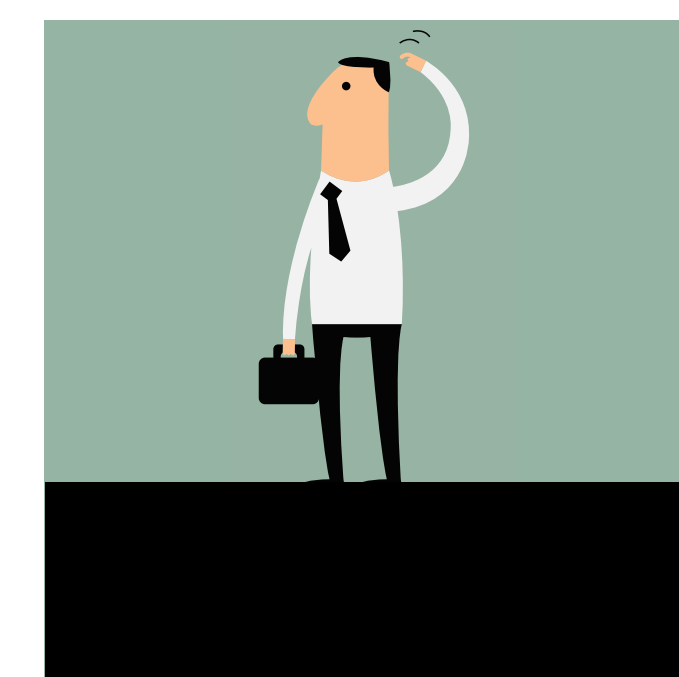
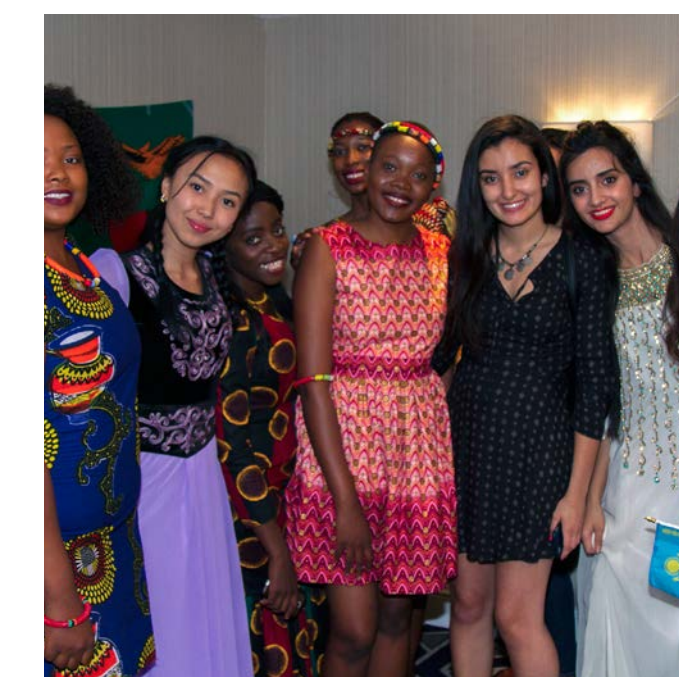


## FSI Recognizes Industry Award Winners



FSI staff who recently received learning industry awards pose with the new display on the awards at FSI. FSI unveiled its Awards Wall in June at a ceremony where FSI's senior leaders said they were heartened to see these efforts recognized by the learning industry. The display is in SA-42, around the corner from the Stephen Low Information Center. ■

*Photo by Michael Morrison*



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to Read Story

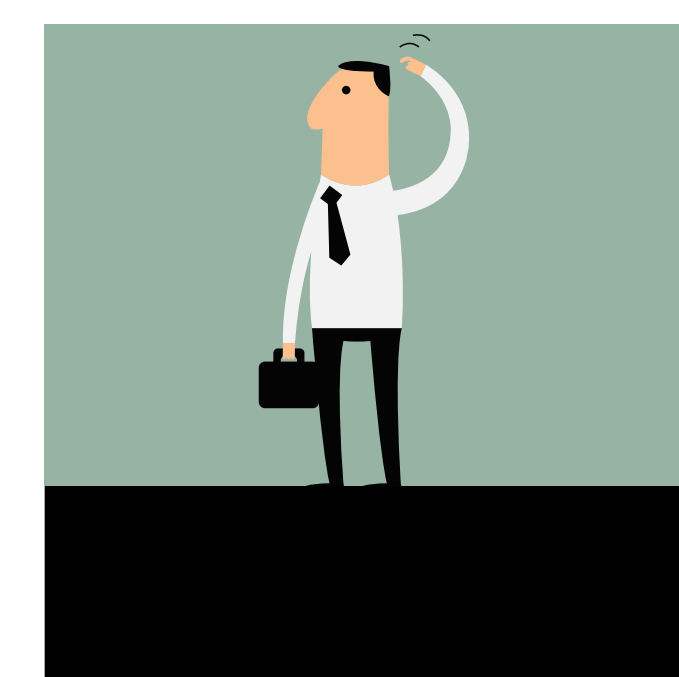


## Young Women's Conference Held in Washington



Gathered at a cultural festival held as part of the Study of the U.S. Institutes' (SUSI) Women's Leadership Conference are undergraduate students from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iraq, Zambia and other nations. SUSI, a unit of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, sponsored the conference, which brought 95 undergraduate women from 20 countries to Washington, D.C., where they were starting their five-week SUSI programs. ■

*Photo by Adam Lee*



**TAP** Image  
to Read Story

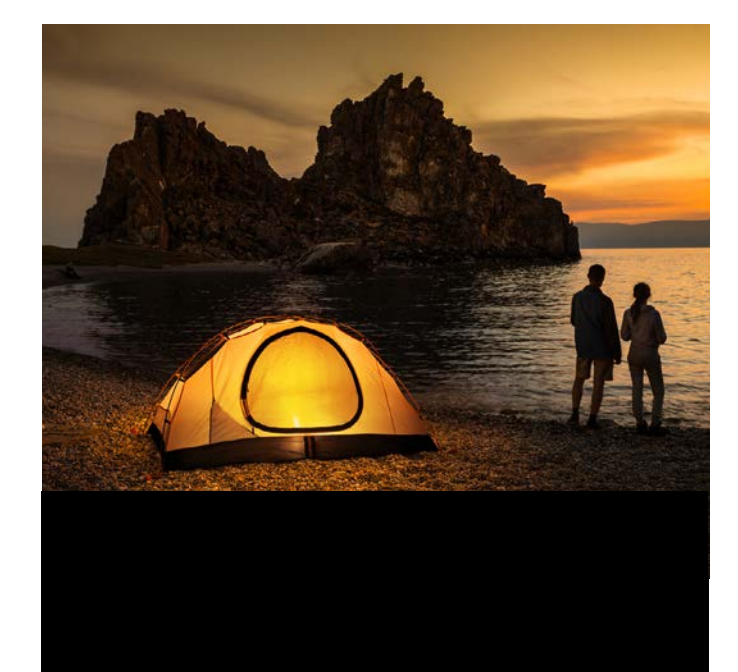
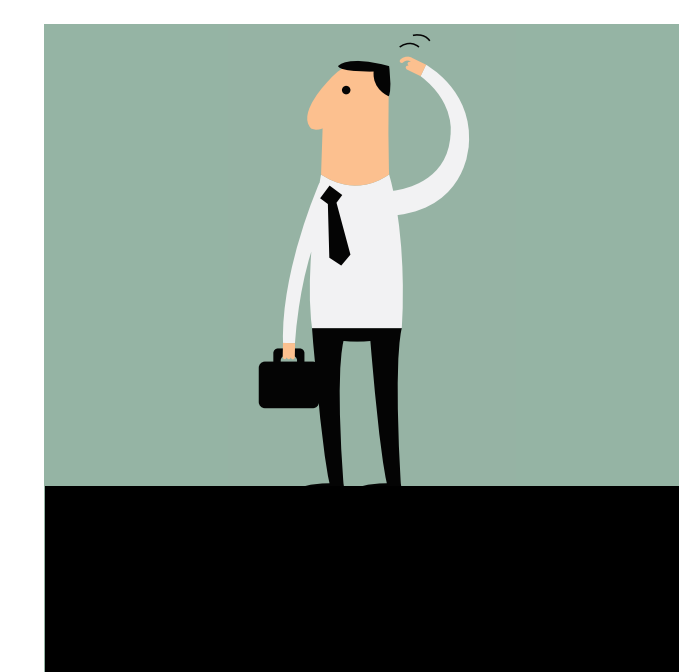


## Soccer Star's Visit Promotes U.S. Study



Indian Super League soccer player and U.S. university alumnus Kean Lewis, left, speaks with youth at the OSCAR Foundation in Mumbai, India. A nonprofit, the OSCAR Foundation empowers underprivileged youth by offering life skills through soccer and after-school tutoring. In a visit coordinated by U.S. Consulate General in Mumbai, Lewis told 30 young participants of studying sports administration at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey and playing and teaching soccer there. ■

*State Department photo*



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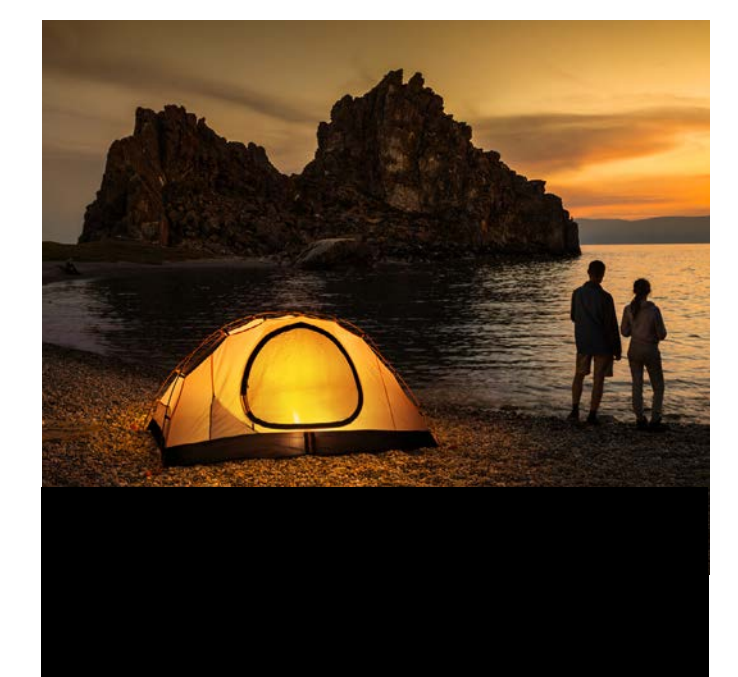
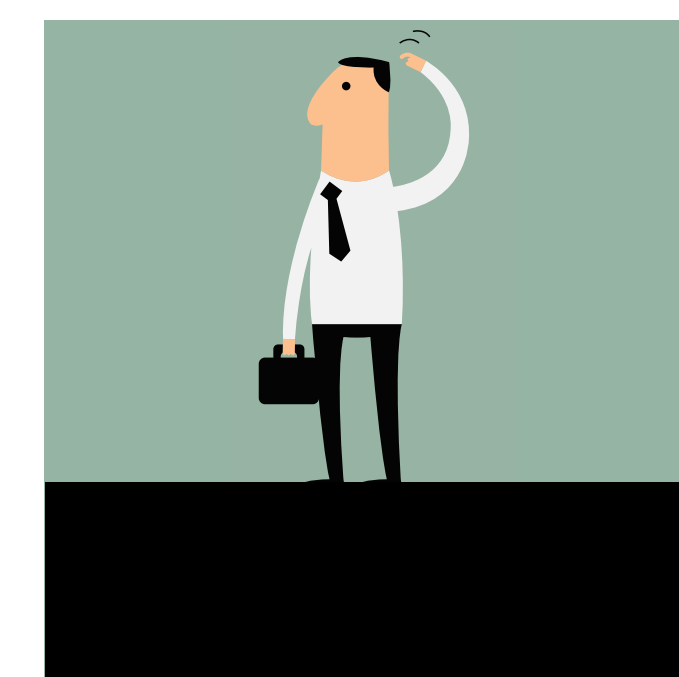
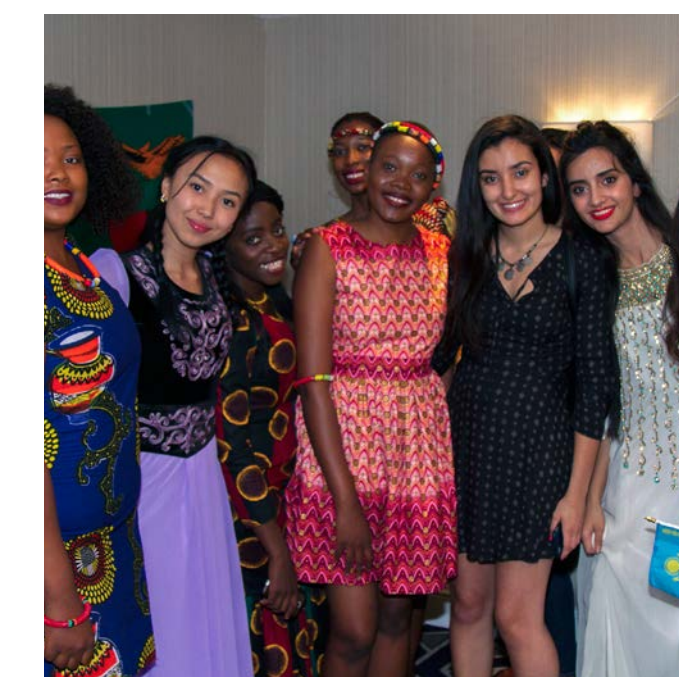


## Ambassador Visits Rural Kenya



As part of recent travel to western Kenya in the lead-up to the nation's Aug. 8 general elections, Ambassador Robert F. Godec presented trophies for a soccer match between local youth and police in Kisumu. The activity engaged youth in the elections and encouraged the nation's security services to remain nonpartisan and adhere to human rights principles. The soccer match was funded by the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. ■

*Photo by Fiona Evans*



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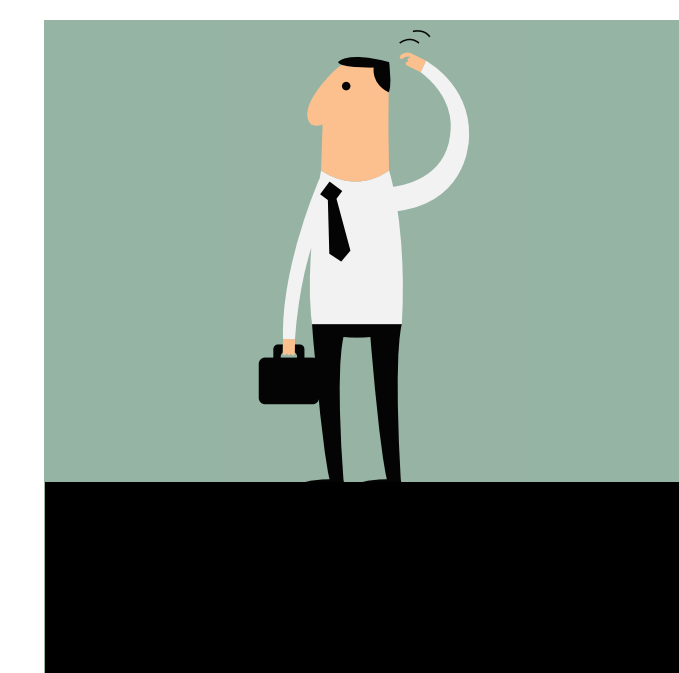


## Singer Visits Serbia



Musician Katarina Pejak poses during her visit to Serbia with members of her band, including, from left, Pera Joe, who plays harmonica; guitarist Bratislav Radovanović; and guitarist and singer Nenad Zlatanović. As a Serbian-American artist who combines blues, gospel and country music, Pejak traveled to Serbia under the auspices of an Embassy Belgrade grant. She performed concerts and gave musical workshops throughout Serbia, focusing on cities where residents are less acquainted with American culture. ■

*Photo by Zoran Trtica*



**TAP** Image  
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## Retirements

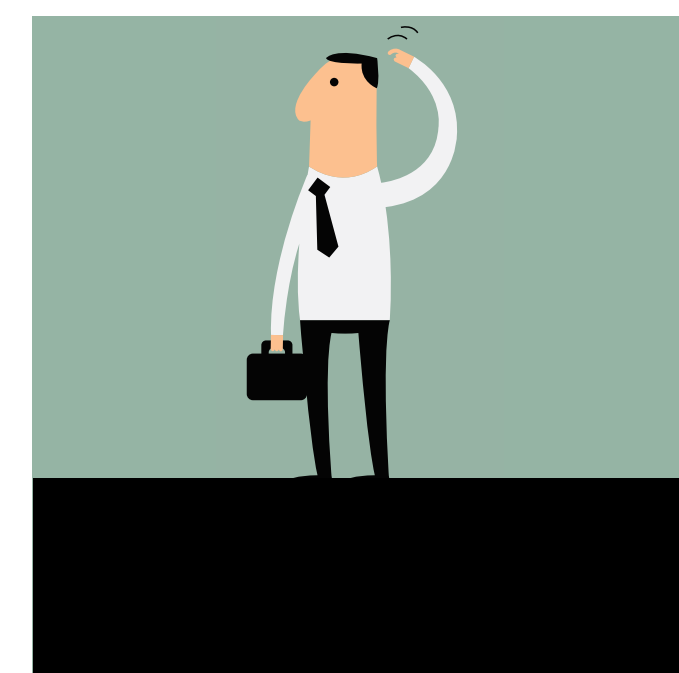
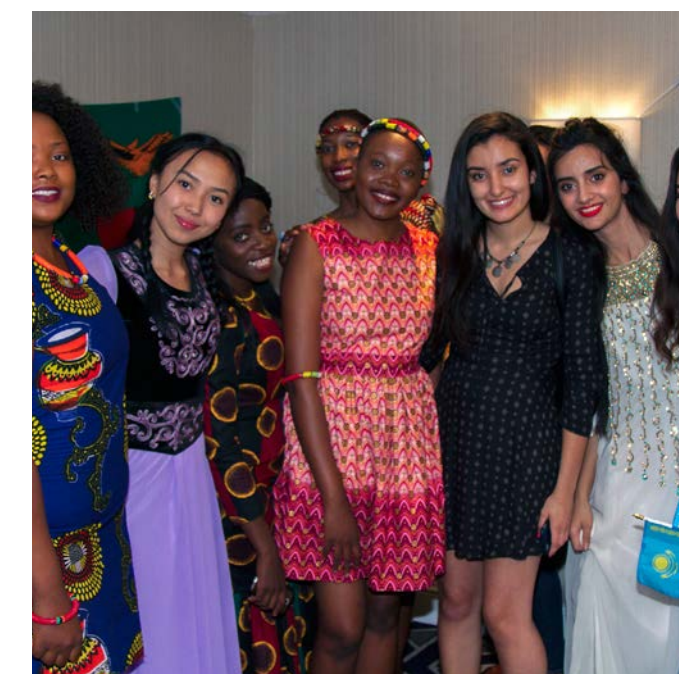
### Civil Service

Albert, John G.  
Brewer, Bernice  
Clark, Randy R.  
Clark, Shari P.  
Eynon, Sandra L.  
Gifford, Robert B.  
Holland, Ronald Roger  
Horne Jr., Alburto  
Lora, Nancy P.  
Lucey, Deborah G.  
Mann, Winston E.  
Pham, Peter Truc  
Purnell, Roy Allen  
Smith, Murray J.  
Sullivan, Charles William  
Sullivan, Robert F.  
Waters, Sandra L.

### Foreign Service

Alcantara, Bartolo  
Beecroft, Robert Stephen  
Byron, Kevin M.  
Catala, Carmen Pickett  
Chomiak-Salvi, Tania  
Classick, Carla D.  
Classick, Michael A.  
Cudal, Gabriel F.  
Dahm, Amy E.  
Daniels, Jasper Ray  
Depietri, Howard A.  
De Witt, Robert C.  
Dixon, Michael Scott  
Fasciglione, Richard J.  
Flattum-Riemers, Jan Marie  
Fotheringham, Marialuisa N.  
Johnson, Sylvia D.

Landry, Leslie E.  
Leighton Jr., Henry A.  
Lischke, Jeffrey D.  
Mastel, Paul N.  
McEldowney, Nancy E.  
McFadden, John M.  
Moreno, Luis G.  
Nealon Jr., James D.  
Nicholas, Richard A.  
Pedraza, Jose  
Rank, David H.  
Stapleton, Anthony K.  
Touchstone, Michael P.  
Wing, Vincent K.  
Wohlers, Paul Dashner  
Yeutter, David M.  
Zaman, Wendy A.



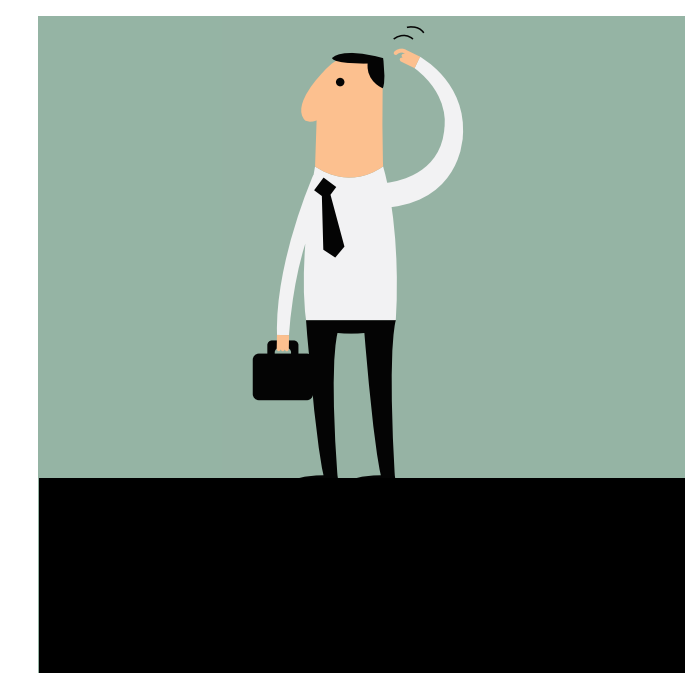


## Ethics Answers

**Q:** I am considering taking a year of leave without pay (LWOP), during which time I plan to seek work in the private sector. Would ethics rules still apply to me even though I am not being paid by the Department?

**A:** Yes, while on LWOP you would remain a federal employee and would therefore be subject to all the ethics rules applicable to federal employees. In light of that, you should be particularly careful when considering outside employment. Please consult with L/Ethics for further guidance at [EthicsAttorneyMailbox@state.gov](mailto:EthicsAttorneyMailbox@state.gov).

*Ethics Answers presents hypothetical ethical scenarios Department employees might face. For help with real ethics questions, email [ethicsattorneymailbox@state.gov](mailto:ethicsattorneymailbox@state.gov)*





# In Memoriam

Cernik

Dowd

Gilland

Kinney

Malik

Stout

Tepas

Williams

Wolfe





# In Memoriam

## Marvin Cernik



Marvin Cernik died May 18 after a short illness. A graduate of Texas A&M University and the University of Michigan, Cernik served in World War II and retired from the USAF Reserve as a colonel after 30 years of service. He was an FSO with USAID for 30 years, serving in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iran, Panama and Turkey, and was fluent in Czech, Farsi, Spanish and Turkish. After retiring, he traveled on cruises, attended Charles University in Prague for Czech language studies and was a vibrant member in his local community.





# In Memoriam

## Delores D. Dowd



Delores D. Dowd died July 15 in Lanham, Md. She began her Civil Service career with the Department in 1971 in the Passport Office. In 1976 she joined the Office of Overseas Schools as a secretary. As a secretary in 1987, she transferred to the Office of Foreign Building Operations. In 1992, she joined the Office of Inspector General (OIG) as a secretary and later became an administrative officer and support services specialist. She retired in November 2003, returning briefly in 2011 to OIG in a temporary appointment as an administrative specialist.





# In Memoriam

## Franklin Joseph Gilland



Franklin Joseph Gilland died at home June 5, in San Antonio, Texas. As an FSO for more than 25 years, Gilland lived in Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, Costa Rica, England, France, Italy, Greece, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru and Portugal. After graduating college, he served in the U.S. Army before joining the Foreign Service. Over his a career, Gilland served as a general services officer, industrial program assistant, regional technical aids coordinator, third secretary alliance for progress and training officer alliance for progress.





# In Memoriam

## Jeanne Kinney



Jeanne Kinney, a longtime resident of Arizona, died April 28 in Phoenix, Ariz. Kinney joined the Department in 1982 as an FSO, serving in Baghdad, Morocco, Turkey, Vietnam and Beirut, where she survived the 1984 bombing of the American Embassy. She received a Department medal for heroism in Lebanon. Upon retiring, she was active in the Arizona Federation of Republican Women, Committee on Foreign Relations and Foreign Service Retirees. Her photographs of the Middle East have been displayed at the University of Arizona-Tucson.





# In Memoriam

## Boulos A. Malik



Boulos A. Malik, 89, a longtime Washington, D.C., area resident, died May 17, in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. He was Egypt's first Fulbright student, in 1949, and as an FSO had a 37-year career with the Voice of America and USIA in Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Pakistan. He was a deputy director and acting director, and worked after retirement until 2011, notably as a United Nations elections monitor in Bosnia, Cambodia and Haiti. He also authored chapters in the Library of Congress' Area Handbook Series, "Country Studies on Algeria" and "Country Studies on the Dominican Republic and Haiti."





# In Memoriam

## Irene Eva McDonald Stout



Irene Eva McDonald Stout, 93, died June 22 in Fayetteville, Ga. She was born on Aug. 24, 1923, She worked as a church secretary for 13 years and then worked overseas as a Foreign Service secretary for 16 years, serving in Brazil, Chile, the Netherlands, Panama, the Philippines and Sierra Leone.





# In Memoriam

## Lois E. Tepas



Lois E. Tepas, 94, died at home in Mission Viejo, Calif., June 19. Tepas served in the U.S. Marine Corps (1943–1946) and was a member of the Women Marines Association and Women's Overseas Service League, both of Orange County. She joined the Foreign Service in 1957 and served in Burma, China, Denmark, France, India, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Pakistan, Taiwan, Vietnam and Washington, D.C. After retirement in January 1984, she continued to travel and serve the local community.





# In Memoriam

## Kevin Fairfax Williams



Kevin Fairfax Williams, 52, a Civil Service employee, died June 11 in Brandywine, Md. He served for more than 32 years with the Department of State, developing an arrival/departure application that was used until 2012. He also spent several months in Kuwait, served a tour in Lagos and also learned to work on radios and telephones while a network specialist. Williams loved the overseas life and visiting new locations, and was a passionate motorcycle rider and a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism. He was also a fight choreographer for the Washington Opera and the Maryland and Virginia Renaissance Festivals. He enjoyed singing and performed at annual holiday parties.





# In Memoriam

## Martin Samuel Wolfe



Martin Samuel Wolfe, a Washington resident for more than 45 years, died June 15 at his Block Island, R.I., home. Considered one of the founders of the field of travel medicine, Dr. Wolfe worked at the World Bank and joined the Department of State in 1970, traveling extensively with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger on diplomatic missions throughout the world. He eventually founded the Washington area's first private medical practice dedicated to travelers. He retired in 2015, having authored numerous papers and chapters on travel medicine, lectured at George Washington University's and Georgetown University's schools of medicine, and consulted with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.





# End State



A composite image made from 11 photos shows the progression of the sun and moon during the total solar eclipse, which was visible throughout the United States on Aug. 21. *Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco*